



Anthroposophic News Sheet

PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL ANTHROPOSOPHIC SOCIETY, DORNACH, SWITZERLAND
FOR MEMBERS ONLY

26th of January 1941. No. 3/4

9th year.

Copyright and all other Rights of reproduction and translation reserved by General Anthroposophic Society, Dornach, Switzerland.
Responsibility for the contents of the articles appearing in the "Anthroposophic News Sheet" attaches only to the writers.

All subscriptions, communications, notices, advertisements, etc. should be addressed to Miss DORA BAKER,
"Anthroposophic News Sheet" Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland.

Yearly subscription: 17.— Swiss Francs. - Single Copies: 35 cents.

THE TASK OF OUR EPOCH. THE STRIFE AGAINST EVIL.

From a Lecture by Dr. RUDOLF STEINER, dated Nov. 19th, 1917.

I have already given you a more general characterization of the task of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch by indicating that as far as humanity is concerned this epoch has the task of dealing with evil as an impulse in the evolution of the world. I have often explained to you what this really means. We can only cope with evil, if the forces that manifest themselves as evil forces when they appear in the wrong places, are conquered for man, through man's own efforts during the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, so that humanity may be able to call into life something that will be an advantage for the whole future evolution of the world. The task of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch is consequently a very difficult one. For mankind will have to face a great many temptations. And when the powers of evil gradually come to the fore, it is natural that in view of the prevailing conditions we feel more inclined to submit to evil in every sphere, rather than taking up the contest in such a way that the evil forces which we encounter are placed at the service of the Good, of the good evolution of the world. Up to a certain extent however, it is necessary that this should take place: that evil be placed at the service of the good world-development. For if this would not occur, we could not enter the sixth post-Atlantean epoch. This epoch will have an entirely different task: that of leading us above all towards a life that incessantly contemplates the spiritual world and that follows spiritual impulses, although we shall then still be connected with the earth. The task of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch in regard to evil, is particularly connected with the fact that a kind of darkening of the personality may set in in human beings.

We know that ever since the year 1879, the Spirits of Darkness that are closest to man and that belong to the realm of the Angeloi, live in the human kingdom, because they were cast down from the spiritual world into the kingdom of man. Consequently they now live in man's impulses and they are active in his impulses. I already explained to you that the fifth post-Atlantean epoch offers many opportunities of falling a prey to dark errors, etc., in view of the fact that there are Beings so closely related to us and invisibly

active among us, whose evil influence prevents us from recognising the spiritual through our understanding. (This, again, is connected with the task of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch). We must, as it were, be willing to grasp the spiritual with our understanding. For the manifestations of the spiritual are not lacking. More and more spiritual wisdom can flow down from the spiritual worlds, since the overcoming of the Spirits of Darkness in 1879. Only if these Spirits of Darkness had remained above in the spiritual realms, only then would they be able to obstruct the streaming down of spiritual wisdom. But now they can no longer prevent the spiritual wisdom from streaming down to us; all they can do is to spread confusion among us, they can darken our souls. I have already described to you what circumstances are being used to darken human souls, and what means are being employed to prevent man from taking in spiritual life.

This cannot, of course, lead to lamentations or complaints; it can only lead to a strengthening of our soul-forces and to an increased spiritual energy. If we succeed, during the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, in attaining what should be attained through the assimilation of the forces of evil in a good sense, then we shall have reached a tremendously important goal; the fifth post-Atlantean epoch will in that case acquire a knowledge through ideas far greater than those of any other post-Atlantean epoch; indeed, far greater than those of any other past epoch of the earth's development.

In the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, Christ appeared through the Mystery of Golgotha; but only in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch will the human understanding be able to comprehend Christ. During the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, men were able to grasp that the Christ-impulse gave them something that could lead their souls beyond death; this is clearly evident in the Pauline revelation of Christianity. But something far more significant for the evolution of humanity will come to the fore during the fifth post-Atlantean epoch; the human souls will recognise that Christ is the One who helps them to transform the forces of evil into good.

However, there is one thing that is particularly connected with this characteristic of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, one thing that should be engraved into our souls each day anew, that we should never forget, even though we may be particularly predisposed to forget it:— During the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, man must become a FIGHTER on behalf of the spiritual; he must experience that his strength gives way, unless he always has control over it, for he must have it well in hand in order to conquer the spiritual world. In this fifth post-Atlantean epoch we are in the highest measure dependent on our freedom. We must pass through this! The idea of human freedom is, as it were, the touchstone of everything that concerns us during the fifth post-Atlantean epoch

THE EXPECTANT MOOD IN LIFE

Lecture by Dr. RUDOLF STEINER, delivered at Stuttgart
on the 26th of April, 1918. *)

Let us first turn again to the Guardian Spirits of those who stand outside on the battlefields as a result of the hard conditions of the present time:

Die Ihr wachet über Erdenseelen,
Die Ihr webet an den Erdenseelen,
Geister, die Ihr über Menschenseelen schützend
Aus der Weltenweisheit liebend wirkt:
Höret unsere Bitte, schauet unsere Liebe,
Die mit Euren helfenden Kräftestrahlen sich
Einen möchten, Geist ergeben, Liebe sendend.

TRANSLATION:

Ye who watch over the souls on earth,
Ye who weave within the souls on earth,
Ye Guardian Spirits, who lovingly work
Above the souls of men out of cosmic wisdom:
Hear our prayer, behold our love,
Which seeks to unite with your helping rays of strength,
Submissive to the Spirit and sending out love.

And let us then turn to the Guardian Spirits of those who have already passed through death's portal as a result of these events:

Die Ihr wachet über Sphärenseelen,
Die Ihr webet an den Sphärenseelen,
Geister, die Ihr über Seelenmenschen schützend
Aus der Weltenweisheit liebend wirkt:
Höret unsere Bitte, schauet unsere Liebe,
Die mit Euren helfenden Kräfteströmen sich
Einen möchten, Geist erahnend, Liebe strahlend.

TRANSLATION:

Ye who watch over the souls of the spheres,
Ye who weave within the souls of the spheres,
Ye Guardian Spirits, who lovingly work
Above the soul-men out of cosmic wisdom:
Hear our prayer, behold our love,
Which seeks to unite with your helping streams of
In Spirit-foresight and raying out love. /strength

And the Spirit Whom we seek to approach through our spiritual science, the Spirit Who of His own free will passed through the Mystery of Golgotha for the freedom and progress of humanity, may HE be with you in your difficult tasks.

*) From stenographic notes unrevised by the lecturer.

*

The fundamental characteristic of the spiritual-scientific studies which are being carried on among us is not sufficiently estimated, even in our own circles. Indeed, when this fundamental character of our spiritual-scientific strivings is pointed out, many of us will even not be far from the thought - in abstract words, to begin with: "But this is quite natural; how could it be otherwise!" Yet it is not so. The fundamental character to which I am referring is that our spiritual science not only endeavours to indicate in a more general way that the spiritual world and the individual cosmic beings living in the spiritual world are realities, but it also endeavours to point out again and again in single cases THE WAY IN WHICH everything that occurs round about us and within us, during our ordinary life between birth and death, is a creation of the spiritual world; moreover it shows our endeavour to grasp TO WHAT EXTENT that which occurs round about us and within us is a creation of the spiritual world. I say: It may be thought that when the spiritual gaze is turned with earnestness to the spiritual world, this naturally implies that the things round about us are looked upon as a creation of the spiritual world. But it is a long way for such general, quite abstract thoughts, empty and meaningless as they are, to penetrate into those spiritual places where it can be concretely grasped in detail how the sensory world has been created by the Spirit. A special example will show you this to-day. It is an example that can prove at the same time how far away humanity is to-day from having even an inkling of the truth that the material world round about us, in the form in which we experience it between birth and death, is the creation of a spiritual reality.

In order to explain in detail this special example that we wish to bring forward to-day, let me remind you of what I felt obliged to tell you yesterday in my public lecture. *) Let us now consider the whole matter more closely and more in detail, with special reference to certain practical applications.

Yesterday I spoke to you of what I might define as the gradual rejuvenation of humanity in the course of its development. For if we go back into the evolution of humanity (let us now recapitulate the essential points quickly), as far as that catastrophe in the development of the earth which we call the Atlantean catastrophe, when the continent which once lay between the present Europe and America was submerged and the western American continent arose instead, if we set out from our present time and go back as far as that epoch, we shall come across five epochs of humanity in that course of development.

The first post-Atlantean epoch of culture immediately following the Atlantean catastrophe, is the ancient Indian culture. It goes far back into time, beyond that which can be gathered

*) 24th of April: "Supersensible Man and the Problems of Freedom of Will and Immortality, According to Spiritual Science." 25th of April: "The Riddles of Historical Life According to Spirit Science".

through external historical documents. You may find a description of this epoch, as far as required, in my "Occult Science". But the important point to-day is to bear in mind quite clearly that during that epoch of culture human beings lived in such a way that their soul and spirit took part in their development up to the age of fifty to sixty. This participation in the bodily development is something different from what we experience to-day. When we feel tired or old, we do not take part in the bodily development to the same extent as a child, in its first years of life. No, as we grow older, our soul-spiritual being is not directly aware of our bodily experiences. We do not participate in the decay of our development. For if we were able to participate in a bodily-physical way in this decay, we should learn an enormous amount of things concerning the spiritual world, because we should be passing through a process of involution, bringing with it a shrivelling of the brain gradually becoming mineralised, and an induration of the body. We should in that case learn through our body what we must now learn through spiritual science, if we are at all willing to approach these experiences. In the ancient Indian culture, the descending line of development could be experienced nearly up to the age of sixty. Men were then children up to nearly sixty, but of course, children that were growing old.

Then came the second post-Atlantean culture, the ancient Persian one, which is also pre-historical. During that epoch, human beings had soul-spiritual experiences in connection with their body up to the end of the forties.

During the third epoch of culture, humanity as a whole had again grown younger. For in the Egyptian-Chaldean epoch, the souls only had soul-spiritual experiences and became emancipated from the body between the thirtyfifth and fortysecond year of life.

Then came the age of the Graeco-Latin culture, in which the Mystery of Golgotha took place. man's development in connection with the body resembled that of a child of to-day up to the age of thirtyfive.

Now we are living in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch of culture - for we entered this epoch in the fifteenth century - and now we share in the body's experiences up to the end of the twenties; after that age, we do not participate any more in the descending line of development. That is why man to-day is so little inclined, through his natural disposition, to take into his soul the spiritual as such.

In ancient times, the bodily-physical foundation itself rendered the Spirit accessible, but to-day it is no longer able to give us the Spirit. The Spirit must therefore be taken in by the soul itself. But the soul refuses to do this. In ancient times, it was absurd to doubt the existence of the Spirit: It would have been necessary for a man to die before his thirtyfifth year to doubt the reality of the Spirit. Through the descending development of

his body, he experienced instead in an immediate way what revealed itself as Spirit. In the remote past, it was quite unthinkable that men should have doubted the reality of the Spirit.

But through this course of development a moral impulse, a wonderful moral impulse of humanity - in so far as it is connected with its natural course of development - was lost. Please do not under-estimate this wonderful moral impulse that was lost in the course of this natural process and that must be found anew in a spiritual-ethical way.

In those ancient times, the children learned from their elders: When we grow up beyond the thirtyfifth year, we learn something that we cannot learn in younger years. Let the feeling grow livingly within you that children and young people grew up under the impression: "When I enter the descending line of development, I may look forward to something. I may then expect to know something that I cannot learn now, for my bodily-physical foundation simply cannot give me this experience now." Imagine this feeling, so different from the present-day attitude, the feeling which enabled men to look forward to the ageing process under such conditions. It is something quite different from present-day habits, to look forward to ageing in such a way as to know: Something comes to me as I grow old, which cannot come to me before.

You see, this has changed. Yet the change is not so drastic as one might think. For when one utters a truth such as the one referred to just now, the modern bad habits of thinking must immediately produce an "either ... or". But in reality we never have to deal with an "either-or", but with "one as well as the other".

When we now rise up once more into the ageing course of development, the spiritual does not come to us of its own accord. But when the spiritual spark is kindled in the soul in the way intended by spiritual science, then something DOES rise out of the decaying body, something that penetrates in a special way into what we learn to know through spiritual science. To-day, if you remain without a scientific contact with the Spirit, you will not be able to experience anything special as you grow old; you will not be able to appreciate the ageing process. This scientific contact is not meant to be of a specialised scientific kind, but so that it can be accessible even to the simplest soul, for, if humanity only wills it, spiritual science can become popular. And in your childhood and youth you will not look forward specially to growing old.

It is otherwise when the spark of spiritual science is kindled in the soul, not through a natural course of development, but through education, through a development that comes into contact with human souls and with their life in common. And if we rightly understand the living significance of spiritual science for the human soul, then this very spiritual science produces once more in

the soul, but now in a conscious way, the feeling: I may expect something, when I grow old. Growing old has a significance of its own. That which shall live in me at the age of thirtyfive, will be different from what lives in me now, at the green age of twenty.

This mood is tremendously important for the human soul; it is the mood which I should like to designate as the expectant mood in life, that simply knows: The creation which you experience through your own being, this you must in all earnestness consider as being created out of the Spirit.

But at the present time, in which we do not allow ourselves to be influenced by the knowledge of the Spirit, do we earnestly look upon the creation of man as a creation of the Spirit, even though we may admit this in empty phrases? - No, in real practical life this is not in any way the case! For if this were really the case, we would say to ourselves: There is a sense in growing old. The whole course of human life is a creation of the Spirit; we do not grow old in vain, for the spiritual manifests itself within us in ever new forms. What thus arises within us, manifesting itself from within, will continually appear to us under new aspects.

To live expectantly, to expect something from the ageing process year by year, is the result of consistently and earnestly adhering to the sentence that everything round about us and within us is a creation of the Spirit. To live expectantly is a mood that should penetrate into education and become familiar to education; it should flow into the whole structure of education. Children will thus obtain from early childhood upwards, and as young men and women, and even later, the feeling: The Spirit does not as yet give us everything, while we are young; but as we grow older, it reveals continually new truths that rise up in the soul.

We only need the influence of the knowledge of the Spirit, if we do not wish to ignore and if we wish to take into consideration what seeks to rise out of the depths of our being, for the ageing process is not a meaningless process, but it has a deep significance. At the present time, young people feel annoyed if we still expect them to have this feeling; even the youngest think that they are ripe enough to enter Parliament and to represent the government, as a matter of course, although that is not their place, for judgments on man's social structures and conditions can only be formed out of a mature survey of life. If we have this expectant mood in life we know that what we take for granted in regard to external structures cannot be a living knowledge, cannot be livingly experienced and known, unless we have reached a certain age in life.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

POETRY AND THE SHAPING OF LIFE

By Albert S t e f f e n

Poetry must be in conformity with the times. That is to say, it should not take up a theological attitude and ignore an experience which has become a general experience of humanity - natural science, based on the observation through the senses and on the intellect Goethe, and he himself said this, proceeded from physics, and not from metaphysics. He set out, for instance, from an aperçu and, through his individual world-development, he gave it an objective significance, although it might only have taken on the form of an epigram.

The modern poet should not flee from naturalism, but he should instead overcome it. He should not content himself with feasting on the divine treasures of the past, which the dogmas wish to secure for him, but he should become a free man. He must first of all be able to face nothingness. Human development itself leads him to that point. After a certain time of life, the body whose growth is arrested, no longer gives him a spirituality that helps him on. From now onwards, the only possibility of growth lies in grasping the development outside his body, so that the external world, for which he unfolds an untiring interest, furthers his development. This, however, is a concern of the will, it is question of exercising, of acquiring higher perceptions than the sensory visible ones, which a physical observation of Nature was so far able to transmit.

The spiritual death that threatens humanity - and its inevitable reality is proved by the present catastrophe of civilisation - this spiritual death, above all, should be arrested by the event of Palestine. The moment in which Jesus of Nazareth himself faced this human destiny, in his thirtieth year, was at the same time the moment in which Christ began to be active within him. A new spiritual seed was thus placed into the decaying body of the earth.

Those who had a purely natural-scientific education cannot understand this event; from their intellectual standpoint they must reject a supersensible happening. They cannot perceive that there is an existence before birth and after death; for them, the soul's pre-existence and post-existence does not exist.

But when they grow aware of the zero-point in the middle of life (a fact ascertained by scientific investigation), they may look back to their birth and forward towards death in an unprejudiced way, thus obtaining all kinds of experiences.

This requires a free decision on their part. It is an exercise in which they cannot succeed unless they conquer themselves. But this already implies a spiritual-scientific method, and spiritual science is in that case the logical continuation of